

Remarks by Vice President Pence to U.S. Service Members | Ramstein-Miesenbach, Germany

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Remarks

National Security & Defense

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Ramstein Air Base
Ramstein-Miesenbach, Germany

1:02 A.M. CEST

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, hello, Ramstein! (Applause.) Thank you all for being up so late. I just couldn't pass through without having a chance to meet as many of you as I could. To General Jeffrey Harrigian, Lieutenant General Steven Basham, Major General John Wood, Colonel Matthew Husemann, but most especially to all of the outstanding men and women wearing the uniform of the United States Air Force and all of our Armed Forces: Thank you for coming out tonight. And thank you for your service. (Applause.) It really is an honor to be back — to be back at Ramstein Air Base with the men and women of the 435th Air Ground Operations Wing — (applause) — the 521st Air Mobility Operations Wing — (applause) — and, of course, the enduring courage of the 86th Airlift Wing. (Applause.)

You know, I know it's awful late here tonight, y'all stayed up late to see me, and I'm very honored by that. I really am. Giving me this warm welcome to Ramstein. So — I don't know about you, General Harrigian, but it looks to me like these airmen might just have earned a three-day weekend. What do you say? (Applause.) I had to suggest it. (Laughter.)

But speaking of people that admire all of you, allow me to bring greetings tonight from a great admirer of all the men and women who wear the uniform of the Armed Forces of the United States, a great champion of our military and their families. I bring greetings from your Commander-in-Chief, the 45th President of the United States of America, President Donald Trump. (Applause.)

And I'm looking forward to meeting as many of you as time permits tonight. But I really just wanted to stop by, on behalf of your President and his Vice President, and a grateful nation, to deliver a very simple message to each and every one of you: The United States Armed Forces is the greatest force for good the world has ever known. And you are that force. (Applause.)

And I promise you, men and women, your Commander-in-Chief, his number two, and the American people are proud of you. This country is more thankful for the service that you render every day than you will ever know. But, first and foremost, thank you for your service.

You know, many people spend all their lives wondering if — if they've made a difference. But you'll never have that problem. Because each and every one of you stepped up. You raised your right hand. You swore an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America and defend the American people. You chose to be a part of something larger than yourselves. You joined this all-volunteer military. And as the Good Book says: You did not love your lives so much as to shrink from this calling.

Truthfully, the day you took that oath, you decided that our lives were more important than yours. And I want you to know the American people understand that and admire you deeply. You have chosen to do your part to keep the flame of freedom alive. And I want you to know that you have your Commander-in-Chief's and my own deepest respect for your courage and your valor. So give yourselves a round of applause because America is proud of you. (Applause.)

The truth is, you come from the rest of us, but you are the best of us — heroes all. And I'm here not only to say thank you for your service, but to also assure you that you have a Commander-in-Chief who will always have your back. I truly believe, serving alongside him every single day, that President Donald Trump is the greatest friend the United States Armed Forces have ever had. (Applause.)

I mean, from the earliest days of our administration, our President has taken decisive action to make the strongest military in the history of the world stronger still.

In our first year in office, President Trump signed the largest investment in our national defense since the days of Ronald Reagan, including the biggest pay raise for our troops in more than 10 years. And you deserved every single penny. (Applause.)

As the President said not long ago, our active-duty personnel are now the best-equipped, best-trained, and most technologically advanced fighting force in the history of the world. And it's true. And with this renewed American strength, we're once again embracing America's role as leader of the free world.

Under this President's leadership, and by virtue of your service, we're standing with our allies and we're standing up to our enemies.

Here in Europe, I'm proud to report that our NATO Allies are contributing more to our common defense than ever before. (Applause.) As the home of the United States Air Forces-Europe, your service here at this historic base supports NATO missions all over the world. You support our armed forces, our allies, and our partners on three continents, it's amazing to think, and 124 countries. And you make it possible to move troops and supplies wherever they need to be, anywhere in the world, 24/7, 365 days a year.

Ramstein Air Base is the heart of the American military on the European continent, and the free world is safer because of all of you. (Applause.)

And speaking of security, I'm pleased to report to all of my fellow Americans that, just a few hours ago, at President Trump's direction, we concluded a successful negotiation in Turkey that directly impacts missions that you support here at Ramstein Air Base every day.

As you all know, one week ago, Turkish forces crossed into Syria. Earlier this week, President Trump took decisive action and called on Turkey to stand down, to end the violence, and agree to come to the table for negotiations.

And today, I'm proud to report, thanks to the President's strong leadership, the United States and Turkey have agreed to a ceasefire in Syria. (Applause.)

And I know all of you here at Ramstein Air Base have been vital to our mission in that region for years. The progress that we made today, I believe, is directly owing to the work that all of you have labored so nobly to advance here.

You played a vital role in the campaign to defeat ISIS. And today, we have a framework for peace in that region of Syria that will bring security to our allies in Turkey, our allies in Syrian Defence Forces, and it'll advance peace and security for all the men, women, and children who have suffered for years of war and terror. It is progress being built on your service here at Ramstein.

As you stand your post, I want you to know that your Commander-in-Chief, and all of the American people, are behind you 100 percent.

You know, I say that from a grateful heart, but I also say that with true humility. It's always humbling for me to stand before men and women who wear that the uniform of the United States because my life did not take me into service in our armed forces. I'm proud to say I'm the son of a combat veteran from the Korean War in the Army. And Karen and I are the proud parents of a United States Marine. (Applause.) And if it helps, my daughter just got engaged to a Navy pilot. So I'll soon be the father-in-law of a Naval aviator as well.

But, you know, as I stand before you today, I often think it might be altogether fitting for an American like me to come before you, simply to speak a word of gratitude — not so much as your Vice President, but just as a fellow American; a fellow American who lives under the umbrella of protection that you provide from here in Ramstein and across the free world, every day.

But I want to leave you with this admonition, even at this late hour. On behalf of your Commander-in-Chief, I want to urge all of you: Mind your mission, stay sharp, be vigilant, respect the unified chain of command, take care of each other — especially those under your command — and you will succeed in serving this country with distinction.

And as you do this, never doubt for one second that the service that you render here on this continent so far from home matters more to the American people than you will ever know.

The American people are grateful for your service because we know that your service comes with sacrifice for you and for your families. You've stepped forward in a calling that has, as I said before, counted our lives more important than your own.

But I want to assure you, as you go forth, defending America and defending freedom here at this outpost in Europe: In those times that it may seem a little too far from home, and those times that you may — you may feel a sense of loneliness or separation, just know that you do not bear this burden you carry alone.

As you serve here, I want to assure you that wherever you are called to serve, wherever you are deployed, you will carry with you the strength and pride of the American people. You will carry with you the confidence of your Commander-in-Chief. And I also know that, every day, you are carried by the prayers of the American people.

I know, as I travel across this country, when I'm home, that the prayers of the faithful carry the men and women of our armed forces every day. The American people will continue to pray as you serve and protect our nation.

We pray that, as the Old Book says, "No harm would befall you, no plague would come near your tent," and that as you serve on the ground or in the skies that His — that, "He would command his angels concerning you to watch over you in all your ways." And that'll be our prayer, as I know it is the prayer of millions.

So, to the men and women of Ramstein Air Base, thank you for staying up so late to greet your Vice President. I'm honored to be with you today. I look forward to meeting as many of you as time permits.

But I have to tell you, I leave here today, even at this hour, with renewed confidence, looking at all your shining faces and the grit and resolve that I see in your eyes. And I know, as long as we have men and women like you with the courage to step forward and serve; as long as we have heroes willing to put your lives on the line for freedom; as long as we have patriots, like all of you, to defend our nation, I know America will be safe, our freedom will be secure, and the best days for the greatest nation on Earth are yet to come.

So, God bless you. God bless Ramstein Air Base. And God bless America. Thanks.
(Applause.)

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1:17 A.M. CEST